Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

hanging about the minds of realists, and prevented them from attending to what students of actual working logic are talking about. I am much inclined to think that some obsolete superstition of the kind is actually at work.

BERNARD BOSANQUET.

OXSHOTT, ENGLAND.

THE VERIFICATION OF STANDARDS OF VALUE

IT is a familiar contention of pragmatism that the truth as well as the value of ideas is to be judged by their consequences in action. This theory has been applied by Professor Dewey to the subject of practical judgments and moral standards. "The truth of practical judgments," he writes, " . . . is constituted by the issue. The determination of end-means (constituting the terms and relations of the practical proposition) is hypothetical until the course of action indicated has been tried. The event or issue of such action *is* the truth or falsity of the judgment."[1]
In conduct "principles, criteria, laws are intellectual instruments for analyzing individual or unique situations."[2]
Generalized and classified goods are tools of insight, and in ethics "validation, demonstration, become experimental, a matter of consequences."[3]

Up to the present the advocates of this theory have been mainly occupied with defending its central thesis against the formalism of older ethical methods. They have accordingly made little if any attempt to apply it in testing specific current ideals and standards of value. They have rather been disposed to avoid such an attempt, on the ground that it would involve the very failing of ethics which they attack, a tendency to excessive and arbitrary generalization. Art and practical conduct, therefore, rather than science, have seemed to them the proper fields for developing and testing standards.[4]

Such procedure, however, is subject to the obvious limitations, recognized by pragmatists, of all common sense thinking in comparison with scientific.[5]

The latter must no doubt abandon its claim to provide absolute rules for conduct. Yet, granting this, the possibility remains that some of the conceptions for which it has claimed too much authority may contain *as hypotheses* a measure of truth and value under certain conditions; that the power and scope of experimental science, furthermore, may be utilized in developing and testing such hypotheses, on a basis of past experience and subject to the ultimate verdict of future events. Are there ways in which science can be so used without unwarranted generalizing?

---

[1] *Essays in Experimental Logic*, p. 346.

[2] *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, p. 162.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 169, 174.

[4] *Cf.* John Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, p. 71; *Essays in Experimental Logic*, pp. 374–381.

[5] Dewey, *How We Think*, ch. XI.

It has been noted that pragmatic verification and valuation consist at least partially in discovering and comparing consequences. Any prediction of future results must be made largely on a basis of past experience or history. To this extent, then, the verification and valuation of standards are studies in the history of ideas, and are subject to no more dangers than attend all such historical narrative. In observing the past and present operation of specific standards, ethical research has thus a clear field before it.

Disagreement on the general nature, basis and authority of moral ideas is no obstacle to such research. It is clear, at least, that many ideas such as freedom, justice, happiness, growth and control are current in human thinking, and are often described as ends, ideals and standards, though conceived and used in different ways. Some denote abstract qualities in a catalogue of virtues, others the concrete objects of desire or contemplation; some are products of unreflective instinct and custom, others of moral theory; some are treated as absolute rules, others as objects of worship or hypotheses in experiment; some are individual, trivial and ephemeral, others racial, enduring, wide in application and in influence. But whatever their form and function, if they operate in human thought and conduct at all, science may attempt to describe their operation.

Such an attempt would imply for the procedure of ethical inquiry the examination of specific concepts, especially those of major scope and influence, rather than a study of value and value-standards in general; the treatment of these concepts as factors in conduct rather than as static theories, with emphasis rather on their application than on their formulation and justification; the observation of actual problems and decisions, with analysis of the part which standards have played therein. "What functions," the observer would inquire, "has this concept been intended to fulfil, and why? How has it carried out these functions, and what other consequences have followed?" The appropriate sources for such study are less in systems of ethics than in history, literature and applied science, where standards are described, developed and followed in contact with events.

The difficulties in such an inquiry are obvious. To trace the history of any scientific concept is to deal, especially if the concept is old and much used, with a rather nebulous subject-matter. It begins, as a rule, at no assignable date, it has no continuous growth, as from seed to flowering, it has at no stage a clearly outlined identity, and it appears to the observer less as a unified intellectual instrument than as a place of entrance to a world of tangled theories. One contemplating such a history may readily feel the illusion of watching a shifting mist of words, without structure or sequence, and forget that each period may have been a serious attempt at describing stable facts or formulating persistent desires. Each participant in the history has probably felt the impulse, more or less conscious, to sharpen the outlines of his terms by cutting off unwanted accretions of meaning, then by adding his own commentary to set up a more lasting and unequivocal system of relations between names, ideas and reality. But the new definitions often prove scarcely less transitory than the theories of fact. Ideas are shifted from name to name, and rival theories marshal them in conflicting orders, until particular concepts lose all recognizable substance.

A single concept, as a recurrent theme in intellectual history, is accordingly no easy object to follow. At any given time it has probably some recognized name, such as "democracy," and the career of this name may be followed from its etymological origin or its equivalents in earlier tongues, through successive gains and losses of connotation, through various rôles in theory and up to its status in modern discourse. But this inquiry, though of use for some purposes, would fall short of the information required as data for verification—a story of the operation of the concept. For a standard, like any other idea, is more than a name, symbol or concrete embodiment. It is a complex of meanings, which the symbol binds together and points out, and the effect of such a symbol upon thought may include the influence of all these current meanings. Since they, rather than the name, constitute the standard, a history of the standard's operation must include their history, whether or not they have always borne the present name. A concept may be newly put together, but if it consists of older ideas, its history is a continuation of theirs. To attempt a disentangling of such threads, and an account of their intermingling with the rest of experience—other ideas, desires, emotions, the forces of environment—may well be a slow and dubious task.

Yet these difficulties are not altogether insuperable. The study of the history and influence of ideas, far from being considered impossible, forms a steadily increasing part of all historical writing. Though confused at times, ideas can achieve a degree of integrity, especially when as social ideals or scientific concepts they are persistently redefined. Some have been, furthermore, evolved through a fairly continuous development, or constructed out of elements whose antecedents are likewise recognizable. To describe the main outlines of the history of such ideas may prove to be in some measure possible.

In addition to study of past experience, the choice of hypotheses in conduct involves an interest in the future: not alone "how has this standard acted?" but "how may it be expected to act in other situations?" To whatever extent situations are unique, novel and surprising, future effects can not be clearly foreseen. But so far as past experience can be utilized, similarities detected and combinations of events foreseen, decision can be, and is in practise assisted by imagination—the construction of hypothetical situations and responses in advance of action. Can ethics thus estimate the probable consequences of standards under conditions not to be found in past experience?

Some attempt at such hypothetical reasoning is made in almost every scientific argument that attacks or defends a proposed policy, as in theories of government or economics. Its uncertainty in prediction is obvious, and it runs the constant risk, through the need of imagining conditions in a more simple and general form than they occur, of overlooking important contingencies. Yet it is a necessary part of any reflection that aims not at mere understanding of the past, but at appraisal and adoption of purposes. Such consideration by ethics of the major policies with which it deals is thus a logical extension of the procedure necessary in all applied science. If ethics is to achieve conclusions that are applicable in practise, it must attempt to forecast the probable consequences of following certain standards, in relation to certain typical conditions. In what kinds of situation, in other words, might a given standard be applied? What would be its probable effect, if certain other factors were present? What emotional, instinctive or habitual responses would it tend to stimulate? What rational inferences would it imply, and what alternatives in action would it tend to select and favor? What later consequences might then be expected?

The decisive step in verification still remains to be taken, even after past and probable future consequences are known. Consequences themselves may be subject to varying appraisal. Beyond certain limits, it can not be expected that this final step should be made. The pragmatic notion of truth implies abandonment of the attempt at absolute verdicts, whether on a basis of consequences or not. Such verdicts would themselves require standards, and these latter also would be subject to dispute. No appraisal may be expected to result from the above research, then, except of a tentative and approximate nature, expressed in terms of comparison, and with reference to specific conditions.

A knowledge of the consequences of a standard does, however, provide data for appraising it by whatever other standards are accepted. In speaking of the truth of ideas, for example, Professor Dewey proposes as a test "that satisfaction which arises when the idea as working hypothesis or tentative method is applied to prior existences in such a way as to fulfil what it intends."[6] William James's "real doctrine is that a belief is true when it satisfies both personal needs and the requirements of objective things. Speaking of pragmatism, he says, 'Her only test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines wtih the collectivity of experience's demands, nothing being omitted.' "[7] "Truth as utility means service in making just that contribution to reorganization in experience that the idea or theory claims to be able to make."[8]

According to this test, then, a comparison between the intended and the accomplished or probable consequences would be tentative verification. More specifically, the standard in question may be found to rest upon self-contradictory arguments, or on an unverified belief regarding the effects of certain actions. It may be found to produce failure, discord and pain. Such conclusions may fall short, philosophically, of absolute verdicts on truth and value, but in intelligent conduct they have all the cogency of such verdicts, and more concrete meaning.

To know and compare the working of current standards, in other words, is to know their interrelation; to know which coöperate and confirm each other, which deny and conflict; to find areas of agreement and areas of dispute or ignorance. In practise this is equivalent to a recognition of certain main lines of conduct which are, though not certainly good, less questioned than others, and which illuminate by contrast the fields where discovery and innovation are more needed.

The choice of hypotheses in conduct is of course not confined to selection between ideals already formulated, or even to continuous

---

[6] *Essays in Experimental Logic,* p. 320.

[7] *Ibid.,* p. 324, quoting James's *Pragmatism,* p. 80; *cf.* also *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy,* pp. 95, 150.

[8] *Reconstruction in Philosophy,* p. 157.

and

development of them. Future experience may suggest conceptions which require to be expressed in entirely new terms, and to be regarded as distinct from the old. The science of ethics can doubtless aid in the process of discovering and interpreting the data for such hypotheses. But several considerations warrant present emphasis on the study of older concepts. They contain an accumulation of long experience with the chief activities of life, whose testimony has not yet been agreed upon. Future experience can hardly be quite discontinuous with the past, or produce ideals unaffected by it. The formulation of new standards can not confidently be attempted without some decision upon the validity of the old, and the problem of testing them when formed is not unlike that of judging older and more familiar subject-matter. Although the present situation in ethics, however, may suggest the need of attention to historic ideals, new and proposed conceptions as well may be examined with a view to discovering their actual and possible consequences in relation to other factors in experience.

Pragmatism and the empirical theories which preceded it have amply demonstrated the futility of rigid and premature moral generalizations. But a consistent ethical pluralism will not be content with wholesale rejection or neglect of all general standards. It will examine them separately and in comparison as possible instruments in conduct, to discover if some are perhaps more true in assertion and more useful in function than others. If the funded experience of the past concerning good and bad is to be made available for use in present action, the work of organizing it must be carried on by the sciences, such as ethics, which concern themselves with problems of value. And if these sciences are to accomplish more than destructive criticism and inconclusive description of social and psychological processes, they must undertake the systematic development and appraisal of hypothetical standards of value.

The following questions are possible specific modes of inquiry into the operation of a standard:

What are its general meanings as at present accepted, its definitions, descriptions, constituent ideas, implied assertions? Are they at present widely different, so as to make the standard ambiguous, and act in different ways?

What are their histories? How have they come together to form a more or less coherent conception? What associations have they had with other theories, problems, events and conditions?

For what functions has the standard (or its several elements, if they have operated independently) been used or intended? As descriptive law or concept? As object of desire, admiration, contemplation, idealization, reverence, worship? As aim or policy? Immediate, ulterior, ultimate, *summum bonum?* As standard, criterion, guide in decision and valuation? Subordinate to others, or supreme? Absolute or hypothetical? What beliefs and aims are implied by so using the concept?

By whom has it been used? What sorts of people have rejected or abandoned it? When has this acceptance or rejection occurred? Under what circumstances? In what sorts of problem?

What factors have led to this acceptance or rejection? What instincts, habits, customs, preferences? Are these usual or exceptional? What environmental conditions have been influential? What beliefs, premises, evidence, inferences, have led to acceptance or rejection, especially in regard to the nature of the universe, of man and his place in it, and in regard to the probable consequences of certain ways of acting? Can these be judged as true or false?

What immediate consequences tend to follow its use? As actually applied? If consistently and thoroughly applied? If there is a difference what has led to it? What responses in emotion or action does it stimulate? What judgments and inferences does it entail? What effect has it in selecting between alternatives, in reaching decisions, choices, solutions? Does it indicate the selection of certain types of alternatives rather than others? Entirely, or on a basis of comparative amounts or degrees? What ones, and by what specifications? Does it select in use as it is expected to; *i.e.,* does it fulfil its intended function? Are its meanings and suggestions different in practise from its formal definitions? What other factors, organic, intellectual, environmental, coöperate to produce these results?

Are the situations in which it can be applied frequent, important, crucial, confined to particular times and places or lasting and widespread? For what types of alternative does it indicate no selection? What changes have taken place in its mode of functioning?

With what other standards does it interact, theoretically or practically? With what ones would it interact if consistently applied whenever possible? Does it tend to conflict with these? To what extent? With any margin of agreement? What has produced this conflict? Does the standard corroborate, agree with others? To what extent? As means, end, or in coördinate status? In what types of problem does it interact with others, and with what results? What are its relations to scientific knowledge other than value-standards?

What later consequences, organic, emotional, intellectual, individual, social, tend to follow its use? Which are constant and which confined to particular times and places? What other factors combine to produce them? Which are expected by the persons who use the standards, and which are unexpected? What would follow if the standard were more consistently carried out? To what extent do these results (actual and possible) agree with, conflict with or re-direct the more constant impulses, desires and capacities of human nature?

In what ways may the standard and its consequences be modified?

THOMAS MUNRO.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

BOOK REVIEWS

Manhood of Humanity; The Science and Art of Human Engineering. ALFRED KORZYBSKI. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company. 1921. Pp. xiii + 264.

In the preface the author announces that (p. ix) "This book is primarily a study of Man and ultimately embraces all the great qualities and problems of Man."

Count Alfred Korzybski temperamentally seems to be a philosopher and poet who was trained to be a mathematician, engineer and soldier. His natural inclinations have led him to be intensely interested in humanity. In trying to explain human behavior he has used mathematical and engineering terms and figures of speech.

The sub-title of this volume "The Science and Art of Human Engineering" means the directing of the energies and capacities of human beings to the advancement of human weal.

Man has brought much suffering upon himself because he has been ignorant concerning himself, so in order to get a better understanding of humanity the author has proposed a mathematical investigation of the problem. He claims that mathematics must become the basis of the social sciences because of its characteristic precision, sharpness and completeness of definitions. The natural sciences have gone on much faster than the "so-called social sciences" because they have used mathematical methods. Humanity is said to be in its infancy because of so much purposeless sacrifice and wasted energy.

A very novel explanation of the relation of mankind to other organic life is offered. Plants as living organisms appropriate the basic energies of the sun, soil and air. They constitute the lowest order of life. This life order or capacity is represented by the